

**REMARKS**

In response to the Official Action dated March 31, 2003, Applicant amends the application and requests reconsideration. In the Amendment, claim 6 has been added. No new matter has been added. Claims 1 and 4-6 are now pending and under examination.

New claim 6 is supported by the application as originally filed (see, for example, the first full paragraph on page 4).

Claims 1, 4 and 5 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over WO 97/28880 in view of Baumann (U.S. Patent 5,688,396). For the following reasons, Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection.

First, claim 1 recites a liquid filter including a support body for the filter element. This support body is not disclosed by WO 97/28880, contrary to what is stated in the Office Action. The Office Action considers element 21 shown in Figure 2 of WO 97/28880 as a support body for a filter element. Applicant respectfully disagrees. A support body for a filter element is well known in the filtration art and is used to support the filter element against forces exerted by fluid flow through the filter element. In the embodiment shown in Figure 1 of the present application, for example, the support body (16) is used to support the filter medium of the filter element (12) against the forces caused by outside-in fluid flow through the filter medium. The support body (16) prevents the filter medium from collapsing towards the hollow center of the filter element (12). Element 21 of WO 97/28880, on the other hand, does not perform this function. In fact, as shown in Figure 2 of WO 97/28880, element 21 does not even contact the filter medium of the filter element, let alone supporting the filter medium. As admitted in the Office Action, element 21 is the housing of the filter, not a support body for a filter element. Consequently, a person with ordinary skill in the filtration art would not consider element 21 of WO 97/28880 as a support body for a filter element. If the Examiner considers it necessary, Applicant is prepared to provide a Declaration under 37 CFR 1.132 to support Applicant's

contention. Since WO 97/28880 does not disclose a support body for a filter element, the rejection is improper with respect to claim 1, as well as with respect to claims 4 and 5 which depend from claim 1.

Additionally, claim 1 recites a liquid filter including a supporting body for the filter element connected to the cover. The Office Action does not even allege that the cited references, either alone or in combination, teach or suggest this feature. Accordingly, the rejection of claims 1, 4 and 5 is improper.

Furthermore, claim 1 recites that the plate spring can be actuated by a shoulder or a bead of the supporting body for the filter element. In WO 97/28880, on the other hand, the leaf spring (25) ("blattfeder" in German) is actuated by the base plate (29) ("grundplatte" in German), which presses the leaf spring (25) against the outflow hole (23) ("ablaufoeffnung" in German) to seal the outflow hole (23). The housing (21), which is considered as the support body in the Office Action, does not actuate the leaf spring (25). Instead, it only fixes the fixed end of the spring. Accordingly, WO 97/28880 does not disclose the feature that the plate spring can be actuated by a shoulder or a bead of the supporting body for the filter element. Therefore, the rejection of claims 1, 4 and 5 is improper.

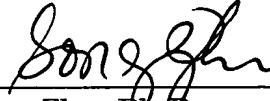
Since it depends from claim 1, claim 6 is also patentable over the cited references. Additionally, claim 6 also recites features not taught or suggested by the cited references, such as features that the plate spring includes an opening and the supporting body extends through the opening of the plate spring and seals the opening with a seal attachment when the plate spring is actuated by the supporting body.

In light of the foregoing remarks, this application is considered to be in condition for allowance, and early passage of this case to issue is respectfully requested. If there are any questions regarding this amendment or the application in general, a telephone call to the undersigned would be appreciated since this should expedite the prosecution of the application for all concerned.

If necessary to effect a timely response, this paper should be considered as a petition for an Extension of Time sufficient to effect a timely response, and please charge any deficiency in fees or credit any overpayments to Deposit Account No. 05-1323 (Docket #178/49984).

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Respectfully submitted,



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